BLODWYN KUI KYHUN LIM GOO

THE WATUMULL FOUNDATION ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

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(1915 -)

Blodwyn Goo describes her early life on the Big Island as the fourteenth of fifteen children born to a Canton-born tailor and his wife. Schooling, church attendance, family and social activities of those years are recalled.

The family's move to Honolulu in 1924 after her mother's death, her graduation from McKinley High School in the middle of the Depression years, her decision to move to California and her life on the mainland are related by Mrs. Goo.

Following her early retirement in 1973 as an interior decorator for Sears, Roebuck and Company, Mrs. Goo became deeply involved in arts and crafts; first at the Honolulu Academy of Arts, then at the University of Hawaii at Manoa. Mrs. Goo enrolled at the University in 1977, where she received her Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in 1981 and her Master of Fine Arts degree in 1986 at the age of seventy-one.

INTERVIEW WITH BLODWYN KUI KYHUN LIM GOO

(MRS. ALFRED GOO)

At the Kanewai Cultural Garden, Honolulu, Hawaii

August 20, 1986

G: Blodwyn Goo

S: Alice Sinesky, Interviewer

G: My full name is Blodwyn Kui Kyhun Lim Goo and I was born in Hawi, Kohala, Hawaii on April 13, 1915, so that makes me seventy-one years old.

There was a language barrier between my father and I in later years because he spoke very, very few words in the English language. My mother spoke fluent Hawaiian among the neighbors, but very little English. She was born in San Francisco and her parents had some kind of a store, a general store and laundry, and I can't trace back on her parents' life there because of the 1906 San Francisco earthquake. Everything was destroyed. I even wrote to the Immigration Station.

My father ran away from home at the age of sixteen--from Canton. At that time the Manchus were suppressing the Chinese quite a bit. He wore a pigtail and he wore that pigtail until 1902 when the Manchus lost their reign over China. Then all the Chinese men decided to cut off their pigtails. He belonged to the Chinese Society that was in Hawi.

First, he went on a whaling ship, a Chinese junk or whatever, to San Francisco. The Chinese Exclusion Act was in being and they could not enter San Francisco. I guess they decided to turn around and come to Hawaii. They came here, and by that time my father was sixteen. He got a job as a stableboy under the last king, King Kalakaua. That was at the end of Fort Street.

Then he became an apprentice under a man by the name of Mr. Young, a Chinese man, as a tailor. He worked as an apprentice for I don't know how many years, and then became a tailor. He was a tailor for life. Actually, he was not under contract to any sugarcane company like the other people. According to records that I saw in the archives, a

lot of them didn't have their last name on the list when they signed the contract. It was either Ah Sam or Ah Leong. All the Chinese first names--not the last names. And it would say from China--not from Canton or Hong Kong. Nothing at all.

Because my father was not under contract to any sugar-cane company, I couldn't find the records at the Immigration Station at all. I traced and traced. I kind of suspect that he worked on the boat as a crewman.

S: Do you know what year he was born and what year he came to Hawaii?

G: Yes, 1856 was the year that he was born. He died in 1946. He was born in some village in Canton that was way up in the hills. I have yet to find the village. I want to go there some day, and I have to make it soon before my legs give out on me. (laughs) Mrs. Tin-Yuke Char drew a map for me and said it would take a good three days to get up to my father's village, which I know, because it's very treacherous. I don't know if it's still there, because the Communists went in there for twenty-five years.

My father went back in 1932 with my brother Wallace, the one above me, to build a columbarium. It's a big concrete thing to put thirty-two urns of my ancestors in. He did that. I kind of suspect that he may have gotten this (displays picture of father in mandarin outfit) for what he did for his family. I don't know now, because there was a language barrier. When we were small, we were not interested and the folks are all gone now. His friends are all long dead, because I'm number fourteen of fifteen.

S: It's really difficult to go back and do something like that.

G: There is one man that was in charge of this Chinese Society in Hawi, Professor William J. Bonk, in Hilo now. He's an anthropologist and he has all the records of that society, and I would like to get hold of him someday. Somebody at the Hawaii Chinese Historical Society said that he would not release these things. There was some friction among those people. I talked to Irma Tam Soong and she's not very young. She's at Arcadia now. This was in 1979 when I started this family book.

I just went from place to place even taping some things from two sisters who had spent their childhood days with my two older sisters. She was the mother of the former Chief Justice William Richardson. Her name was Amy and I taped her and her sister. I got a little more information about my mother being very fat and jovial. Whenever they went over to visit my family, my family had geese as watchdogs and they

would have to stay by the gate and have someone come out and corral the geese before they could come in the house.

But Mrs. Richardson said, "Your mother always had a lot of food for us to eat," because we had two gardens and we raised chickens, ducks, pigeons and we had lots of fruit trees. What Mrs. Richardson said, "Your mother had so many children." My mother had me when she was forty-five, so I'm like a menopause baby. Then she had my kid sister a year and a half later. After that, she didn't have any more children.

I'll give you some bits of what I remember in those days. One time I remember my father got up from his Singer sewing machine, the treadle machine, and picked me up because I was at my mother's breast. I think I was too old then--I must have been a year old--and he just grabbed me and took me to the bedroom and said that I was not to have any more--not to suck my mother's breast. I think right after that she got pregnant again. I remember that vividly.

S: That's really young to remember something like that. Most people cannot go back as far as that.

G: I remember that and I remember--I was born in 1915 and World War I ended in 1918. I think about six months or a year before that two of my brothers were recruited to come to Honolulu to enter the infantry because they were of age. In those days when you took a boat, you had to drive all the way down to the west coast of the Big Island. Mahukona was where they shipped cattle on the boat. All the cattle were tied to the boat first and put on the ship. The human passengers went last. We watched there, the cattle tied to the boat and they swam up to--because the boat was not at the pier--it was outside. I remember saying goodbye to my two brothers because they may not come back. It was pitiful, because when you're young--I was only about two and a half or three.

In those days they had influenza very bad and there was no cure for that. What we wore to ward off the influenza was the little square moth cakes. They put it in a little bag and sewed it up and put a string on it and put it around our necks. That was to ward off the flu in those days.

S: I can remember on the mainland--maybe in the back country--they used something with a really strange name--an asafetida bag--the same idea.

G: Yes. Now I don't remember--I must have had baby asthma at that time. Whether that affected me or not, but years later when I went to Waipahu and I was in the first grade, I did start to have asthma off and on. I remember those two incidents.

Then, of course, other times I went out with my two older sisters and my brother above me and maybe another one--brother Robert--and we went up to the streams and waterfalls. They were not supposed to swim and we were not to tell my father and mother that they went swimming. But you know when you're young. Our older brothers would know how to drill us until, finally, I had to admit that they went swimming.

And, oh that little whip! The whip was made out of rattan--rattan caning. The one that was taken from the old cases when they shipped things to us. My brother would hang it up by the front door and we'd be black and blue all over. Those are things that I--see I have these two--what do you call them--gilly gilly--cowlicks. They say you're a rascal when you're one that has two of those. (laughs) I guess I must have been very naughty when I was young, because I would do things when they said, "Don't do this and don't do that."

There were a lot of fruit trees and, I think, there were some figs ripe or some kind of fruit that was ripe--we had a little Bartlett pear tree. The house was on stilts and, from where my father sat, he could look down in the fruit trees and the little stream and the gardens. The ducks were released every morning to go down in the stream, and when it was time to go home, somebody would corral them and they'd go up and back into their pens. It was real cute.

But there was one day when I was warned not to take the ripe fruit, which I did. The next thing I remember is that I went to the woodshed. We had a little woodshed where they chopped all the wood, because we cooked in a separate kitchen. It was separate from the main house. There were two great big woks. One was for boiling water for the bath and the other one for cooking. We also had a kerosene stove. They looked all over for me because it was supper time. But I went to the woodshed and the wood was only half filled. I went in there and stayed in there until, finally, one of my brothers reached over and got me out. They had had supper already and they were sitting under a great big mango tree airing themselves. I would go to my mother and my mother would push me. I'd go to my father and my father would push me. I'd go this sister and that one pushed me, because they knew I had done wrong. I had taken the fruit. I was sent to bed without supper. Those were the little things that I did.

S: Could we backtrack a little and have you tell me when and where your mother and dad met, when they got married and what brought them here. She was in San Francisco, right?

G: But they came here because of the Chinese Exclusion Act. When they came, I don't know. But I kind of think that my father and mother were matched. My father was already

twenty-nine when he married my mother. My mother was only sixteen. So he was almost twice her age.

S: And that was here in Honolulu?

G: Yes. He worked until he was twenty-nine, and I think his master said, "It's time for you to get married."

S: And I know just the girl.

G: Right. Immediately after they got married they moved up to the Big Island, where they said there were a lot of people of the Hakka dialect. You've heard of the "guest people." They were all there--all the Hakka people with the Chinese Society. They moved up there and my father probably thought that would be a good profession for him to work among the plantation people, to sew for them, which he did. He sewed khaki pants and even flannel underwear.

I remember one time a certain Chinese man ended up with about seventeen children in his family--a Mr. Liu. The walkway would be coming down this way, and he would not take the shortcut. There was a shortcut in back of our house, but you would see him coming down and my father would say, "He'll know exactly how many pairs of pants he wants this year and how many pairs of flannel wear for his children." And that was all done by my father. My father had enough business to keep him going to support a family. We had all the natural vegetation, our vegetables, the fowl to keep going. That was enough.

S: Did your father sew for your family at all, or was it like the shoemaker's children who never had shoes?

G: I think he probably did sew for them because he had to. He couldn't go out and buy it or get another tailor. There were a few things that they bought through Montgomery-Ward or Sears, Roebuck and Company because things were much cheaper. I remember toys. At Christmas time my sisters would order a lot of toys for us. As I said, those things that we wore (in a family picture that she displayed) were American. I remember wearing Mary Jane shoes and Mary Jane hats--big hats--going to church on Sundays.

(laughs) The slips were starched so stiff they would cut into our bodies. Because they wanted to save on sewing so much, they would make our slips with so many rows of tucks and it was let down each year or every other year. Shoes were bought about two or three sizes larger and then you would stick the paper into the toes. Or we had hand-me-downs. I didn't have hand-me-downs because there was a big difference between my older sister and I. About nine years. Besides, she lived in Hilo with another sister. And I was smaller than my kid sister. Whether I wore her hand-me-downs

or not, I don't know. Anyway, these slips were starched so stiff with a certain cornstarch that they made from some kind of root, and they'd add little drops of kerosene to make it smooth when you iron.

But we had the nicest crocheted yokes. You know, on the petticoats they had those. I wish I had those nowadays. But my older sister made all those for my kid sister and me. We were really lucky to get all those. And these little dresses with three rows of ruffles and all that. They come back in style now. We were dressed so nicely to walk to church. To me, in those days, it seemed like twenty miles, but actually it was maybe a mile and a half.

S: What church did you go to?

G: It was a Chinese church run by one of my cousins on my mother's side. My mother was a Yee girl and he was a Yee. He had about six children and we always went there, although my father belonged to the Chinese Society that had three deities. My father was good enough to let my mother go to church. Whether she was baptized, we don't know. We know that she was called Mary sometimes, but her Chinese name was Ah Yin. I don't think it was on the birth certificate.

But anyway, we went to church every Sunday--my two older sisters and my brother and my kid sister and I--with all the stiff things, the Mary Jane shoes, or other kinds of shoes. On the way home we would not take the long way home with the road coming down. We would come down the hill, take off our shoes and cross that stream, and go home because we wanted to take off our things. It would get so hot by twelve o'clock.

Of course, we had another older sister, number three sister, that lived not far from us. It was across the highway. There's a little highway that goes around up Hawi, and Halawa, and goes way up to North Kohala. She lived across the highway and there was a stone there. Now there is a sign there that says, "King Kamehameha sat here." That stone had been there for many years. Whether he sat on it, we don't know.

One of my nephews, who was the propagator for the Hawaiian goose, the nene, at Pohakuloa at the foot of Mauna Kea, said, "I think I sat on that rock 2,000 times because every time when I came by there from their home, I would rest."

S: It was a natural resting place.

G: Right. Where my sister lived, we had to pass one Chinese family and a man who made tofu. My sister's house was the last one and that was known as Green Banks. There was another gulch and why they called it Green Banks, I don't

know. It was named by the plantation people. They had pigs and chickens and a vegetable garden and all that.

Everytime when we passed by the first house, they had horses, which I was terribly afraid of. Then we would pass the tofu man that was making tofu. He would only make tofu so many times a month. My sister Mabel was a very talented girl. I always looked up to her. She always stopped at the tofu man and said, "Wait, I want to see how the man makes the tofu." But in the old days they never gave up secrets of what they made, so he would shoo my sister away. He had this great big thing like a mortar that goes around and around and separated the soy beans, so that you would get the curd and the whey. The curd would be the tofu and the whey would be another form of tofu that we used dried up and made it something else. He would always shoo her away because he thought she was getting too smart for him.

She was the one who did a lot of cooking because they went to school--after grammar school--they went up to what they called the Kohala School for Girls, which was not elite, but the girls all went there. They took lauhala weaving and all kinds of crafts. Evidently, missionary ladies taught them and they learned how to sew and they learned how to cook American recipes. That's how my sister knew how to do all this cooking.

I always respected her because she was so talented. If she were alive today, she would be versatile in doing a lot of things that I'm doing now. I really miss her. Of course, she'd be quite old. She'd be over eighty.

S: Where did you children go to school over there? You mentioned an elementary school.

G: It was right in the town of Hawi. The principal, Mrs. Crockett, had a hard time pronouncing all these Chinese names, because in our dialect the names were so hard to pronounce. Filipino names, Japanese names are not so hard, and a few Hawaiian--so she started giving everybody names. I had a Hawaiian sister-in-law at that time and she gave me a name that sounded very much like Blodwyn, but it didn't sound right. The principal said, "I'll give you the name of my friend Blodwyn Edmondson," whose husband was something of an official in the plantation. So that's how I got the name.

Even now people say, "A Welsh name. How come you have a Welsh name?" A lot of people know now. They go to England and Ireland. There's one town in Minnesota that is full of that name because a lot of Irish people live there. I had a customer when I worked at Sears who said, "Your name is not strange to me, because when I lived in that town when I was small, everybody had that name." That was very unusual

because here I'm just myself. There was another girl at Punahou who spelled it W-Y-N-N-E. Just changed it a little bit. So I can't make any mistakes or do anything wrong, or they'll know who I am.

S: Did this grammar school go up to sixth or eighth grade?

G: I think it went up to sixth grade.

S: Were they mostly plantation workers' children?

G: Yes, right.

S: That was why you had all the different ethnic groups there.

G: Yes. I started going back and forth between the Big Island to Oahu to baby-sit every time one of my sisters or brothers had a newborn baby. I was sent here and there. I was named Gypsy after a while. One of my brothers-in-law said, "Her name is Gypsy, because she just keeps going back and forth."

I remember that every night when we ate--the family was large, so the food came from the kitchen down to the big dining room at a long, rectangular table and two benches with my father and mother at both ends. We sat according to the age, but as a ritual at breakfast and dinner before we started eating--the Japanese say some word that they are going to eat now--we would say in Chinese, "Father, eat rice. Mother, eat rice. Big brother, eat rice." And we went down the line. The three smallest ones. Maybe we were taught to do that. We did that ritual every meal, if we sat down together.

Now for lunch. We had a lot of banana trees because there were some sloping parts on the land where we lived and they grew there. When my father ordered things from Honolulu, it was always through American Factors or Theo Davies in a massive way. (laughs) I say a massive way--in big crates. You ordered one case of soda crackers or saloon crackers. In those days we called them calaboose--you know the big, round crackers. There'd be a big case in a corner. And that would be our lunch. We'd say, "Are we going to have lunch?" And we'd stick those big saloon crackers in our pockets.

In those days I loved to wear those coveralls. I think we ordered them, again, through Sears or Montgomery-Ward. I was wearing those little coveralls and I'd stick crackers here and crackers here and get some ripe bananas. That was our lunch. It was the hardest thing to get those crackers down. The bananas helped.

And you know, it's a funny thing, but nowadays if you leave the crackers exposed, they get soggy so fast. In those days, they never did. I don't why. For some reason they made it better or something. It never got soft. The box was always open there and the crackers would never get soft. They would be in the case until we ate them up.

S: Maybe they're adding something to it these days.

G: That was our lunch. Sometimes my sister would just cook a big pot of sweet potatoes and that's all we had for lunch. Sometimes we'd just cook them with water and brown sugar. That was our lunch. We had no particular lunch like nowadays where you eat all this junk food like we have now. We never thought of that.

It was those coveralls that I loved to wear. It got so that even my two boys, during World War II when we lived in New York City, loved those coveralls, too. I had to send for two of those for them because when we went down to Ocean City, Maryland, where my girlfriend had some motels, and we stayed there for our spring or summer vacations, they never took off their coveralls. When they went to bed, I had to sneak them off to wash them.

S: They're so comfortable.

G: Right, so that's what we wore. We had a doll house--it was a great big crate. I don't know how it got up in the avocado tree. In those days they were not called avocados; they were called alligator pears. They were as big as pears --avocados. You had to wait until they got maroon or brown. And they got that big. (measures with hands)

S: And they were that big? Maybe ten inches or so.

G: Oh, yes. They were really huge. They have in the South Asian countries, but they don't have them here now because they have all the hybrids. In that tree there was that great big crate, and my sisters fixed it up with all these burlap sacks and that's where I had all my toys from Sears, Roebuck. My childhood days weren't bad there. We had a little dog, a black and white dog. I think it could have been generations from that picture--the one picture that shows the family. (displays family picture) You see, the hind legs are on the top step and the front legs are at the bottom.

S: He's just sitting there. (laughs)

G: I don't know how they ever got all these children to stand still to take their picture at the same time. It was really remarkable when I looked at that closely and I noticed that they all had corsages and each one of them wore jade

bangles. In those days they must have been very inexpensive because each one of them wore two. Of course, (some of) these brothers had hand-me-downs probably but look--all little corsages that my sisters had made.

S: How did the children dress to go to school? You said you got all dressed up for church.

G: For church, yes. I think we just wore ordinary gingham dresses that my sisters made. I don't think we wore pants. In those days the girls never wore pants, except at home.

S: Did you wear shoes to school?

G: No, I don't think so. We went bare feet.

S: When you were growing up--in the early years--how many were still at home?

G: Six of us. Actually, seven because one got married and he had his own room with his wife--eight.

S: But the older ones, as they grew up and got married, moved to other islands or away from Hawi?

G: Yes, one moved to Hilo and one went to Kamuela--my oldest brother married a Hawaiian girl from Kamuela--and that's how he obtained the property where my parents lived with the children. He got that through the Hawaiian Land Commission because his wife was Hawaiian. Had to pay tax of one dollar a year. And that's how he got his wife's name on the land. Otherwise, my father would never have been able to live on such a vast property as that. Prior to that, when I told you about the geese, he was living on the main stream or highway. That's where he lived with the geese and his tailor shop. Mrs. Richardson said that later they moved on down there when my brother got married and was able to obtain that land. If it wasn't for that, we would never...

Now it is just banana fields. I went back there a number of times and it made me so sad because I can't look back. Where was the avocado tree? Where was the house and all that? But next time I go back--there is a Filipino man living there now. The last time I was there I was going up to the cemetery to my oldest sister's grave and he looked at me and I looked at him across the street and I wanted to... And I said, "No, I think I'll talk to him another time."

He was going to the back way to get to his house. I wanted to go there to see if I would remember, because we had a natural spring where we drew water for our drinking and cooking purposes. My brothers worked all day in the plantations. My sister Katherine and sister Mabel and my brother, who was too young to work, would tote two buckets of

water--I don't know how many trips every day--to put in these great big rain barrels in the kitchen for our washing, our bathing--because we had two bath houses--and for the kitchen for use every day. They would have to trek--it was really rough. She died of asthma many years later and I think that all that hard work she did for many years was really hard on her.

But that natural spring was really nice. It was not too far from the stream that came down, but it was enough that it never went dry. It was the nicest water, which I appreciate now after travelling through California this summer. Oh, that water smelled like Clorox.

Anyway, I remember one time when my cousin, who was the Reverend Yee, came to visit us one day in the middle of the day. My father told me to go down and get a cup of water for the minister. You know, you have those long-handled ladles so I went all the way down there and brought the water up, but little kids don't know any better, so I had my hand (inside the ladle) so the water wouldn't drop and I gave the handle to him. (laughs) My father said, "That's not very nice to poke your hand in the water." The minister said that it was all right and he was appreciative of the water. That's another one of those incidents that I remember as a little kid. You don't do those things, but you do it because you thought it was handy to carry the water that way.

Coming back to being called Gypsy. I don't know whether it was done purposely or not, but when one of my brothers named Willie married a girl from Maui but lived in Kohala and worked for some kind of a club. I don't know what it was now. I can't remember, but he worked as a cook. She was only sixteen when she married and I was sent there to baby-sit. You know that the Chinese when you have a newborn, they are so superstitious that the mother is confined to the bedroom for a whole month without coming out. You don't see sunlight or anything. They just draw the shades.

S: I did not know that.

G: Yes, and all they had was maybe rice and maybe some kind of egg that's in vinegar or pigs feet or chicken in whiskey, boiled. The diet was for a whole month. And tea and rice. We would have to take the meals into them.

S: Did the baby stay in the same room with them and they took care of the baby?

G: Right.

S: But you were baby-sitting. Would you bring the baby out?

G: I didn't baby-sit until after the month.

S: So the mother and the baby were confined for that whole month.

G: Even up until many years later that was done here in Honolulu. The newborn baby and the mother. If they were wealthy enough, they would go down and buy pigs feet and fresh ginger root, because it was supposed to ward off all the gas from the stomach, which I found later. They would cook the pigs feet with vinegar and they would send out all this cooked pigs feet and distribute to the relatives and say they got a baby boy or a baby girl. We ate that pigs feet until--up to our necks.

But the poor mother in there would have to eat that with Chinese whiskey or Chinese wine--that would be strengthening. They would be confined for one whole month. And I remember, we always thought, "Gee, that was so hard." They wouldn't even let us go in to see the baby. I can't remember now if they let us in, but somebody had to go in and get all the soiled diapers and come out and bathe her. The commode was there to be emptied. That was for many, many years. All my sisters--I remember that they had to that. And the families here in Honolulu when they moved down here later.

S: Did they have their babies at home or go to hospitals or have midwives?

G: Midwives at home. But later on--my brother, myself, my kid sister--were the only three in our family that had a doctor attending. That was Dr. Bond from the plantation. They had a big family there and everybody knew Dr. Bond. But the others had midwives. As to my sisters, I don't know if they went to the hospitals, or had them at home. I know when it was time to have labor, we were sent away from the house until the baby arrived. It was kind of hush up.

That was the first baby-sitting job that I had for my brother Willie. He didn't live too many miles away from where my family lived.

S: So you would go at the end of the month.

G: Yes, to tend to the baby. Change the diapers and so forth. Then I was sent to my oldest brother who lived in Waipahu, who was married to the Hawaiian girl from Kamuela. He went to work at the Waipahu plantation store. By then he had two boys. I was going into the second grade--I spent one year at Hawi School--and then second grade I went to Waipahu school. I was sent there to baby-sit. They lived in the plantation houses. The little red cabins. They were very,

very tiny. Some of them are still there today. I've gone by there to see and I say, "I don't know how we lived there."

We had charcoal irons. I remember I got burned with the charcoal iron because I wasn't careful. We had to take the boat down, and the channel was so rough I always got seasick even though I stayed on deck. My father had these goza mats. My sisters would always pack a couple of--maybe more than two--hard-boiled eggs and saloon crackers. That was our food until we got overnight to Honolulu. But I was so sick, and my father always felt so sorry for me because he was the one to come to Honolulu with me. When he came to Honolulu, he would go to the Chinese stores, the grocery stores, and order cases of food from Amfac or Theo Davies.

I lived in Waipahu for about two years and then was sent back home because another brother got married and at that time I really don't think it was for baby-sitting. My mother wasn't too well at that time already. She was getting senile. Maybe in those days we didn't know it was Alzheimer's disease or something. They would not let her sit with the family eating. They put her in a separate room off the dining room and I remember having to sit with her--to eat with her--and she would just sit there and eat and she would be laughing away. She would be just laughing away. They made me sit there with her and, of course, I didn't know a thing. Now that I look back, I think she must have been very ill at the time because she was having these laughing fits.

S: She was only about her early or mid-fifties.

G: Yes, because she died at fifty-four and, at that time, my kid sister was too young to sit with her, and that's why they sent me from Waipahu. Another brother had a baby at that time, but at that time they had enough to baby-sit because he married a neighbor's daughter. Then I stayed there until not long after my mother passed away. I think it was 1924 when my father decided we should all move to Honolulu, because everybody was moving away from Kohala. So we moved back here. But to baby-sit here and there. There was another time. I think I made two or three trips to Waipahu baby-sitting for the same brother that worked for that club.

He moved down here and went to work for Rapid Transit as a cook. Then we had to stay with a sister of mine in McGrew Lane and we stayed there, but we just stayed in a little back room. It was very cramped and all that. It wasn't easy to live with other families because that sister was adopted out. She was very angry at my father for sending her out for adoption and yet there were other times she accepted us. So it was just touch and go.

END OF TAPE 1/SIDE 1

It was difficult with my nieces. Several of them were older than I was and one nephew was the same age. It was very difficult. I could not even tell my sister what they did to me. I would tell my sister-in-law and she would say, "Just keep quiet. Don't say anything because we're living here." All that kind of things. I think all family things--squabbles, friction, happen, but you don't dare say. The Chinese always kept quiet.

Then I went back for a while because my mother was not well. We stayed on until my mother's funeral and in this book here (Lim Kyau 1856-1946) I have a whole thing about my mother's funeral because it was very vivid in my mind. You can read the whole thing and take it from the book. It's very vivid in my mind, because I remember the events from the morning and the day before and how superstitious the people were about the religion and about my mother having the stroke, but we didn't know at the time that she had a stroke, and measuring the door because my mother was so fat they didn't know if the coffin would go through the door.

> "On July 3, 1924, my mother passed away after a short illness. This was a funeral I was never to forget; I was nine years old then. A few days before she had a stroke and while they waited for her death they laid her on a mat on the floor in the living room. A lot of incense and candles were burning and my mom just laid there not being able to talk. I even remember someone measuring the front door to see if the coffin could go through.
>
> "The day before her death, the family decided to have her hospitalized. I remember hearing of her death and Wallace, Amy and myself went in a truck to accompany her home in a crude wooden coffin. We three sat in the back of the open truck with the coffin and I was never so scared in my life for there were so many superstitions in those days. Sister Nyen had come from Hilo and tried to console us. At night, I dreaded to look out the window for fear of the devils or Mom's ghost would come back. Yet there were only leaves rustling in the wind and with kerosene lamps in use they made many shadow plays and widened our imaginations. I went to sleep with the blanket covering my face.
>
> "Even though my mother attended services at the Chinese Christian Church she was given the traditional Chinese funeral because my father was affiliated with Tong Wo.
>
> "From early morning many Hawaiian friends of my mom's came with their lauhala mats and strung long strands of leis from their gardens. They sat outside

under the trees while the Chinese priests conducted rites for my mother inside the house. We had to wait for my oldest brother, Fook Sin, to arrive from Honolulu, and he was my mom's favorite. I can understand now, for through his Hawaiian wife, Lydia, she was to obtain that land for us to live on.

"Our large kitchen was separate from the main house and cooking must have gone on all day to feed those who came. Cooking was also done at Tong Wo. It was a long procession to the cemetery for we lived below the slopes where Mom was to be buried. We lived in a gulch so the road was winding, we crossed the main road and on to the yard of the Society. There, a great big roast pig and other foods were displayed on a table. As you know, Chinese traditional funerals are quite demanding and tiring and I imagine the three young ones did not comprehend what was going on.

"After the funeral, food was served to all and pieces of the pig and perhaps oranges were given to those who came.

"At the end of summer that year in 1924, the rest of us moved to Honolulu. Many years later, Mom's remains were removed according to Chinese tradition, and they remained in a house at Pauoa Cemetery for many years. After many delays, finally in the late 1960s I had both parents' remains united at Diamond Head Memorial Cemetery. Later, Brother Kui Fah was buried next to them."

S: Then you moved over to Honolulu in 1924?

G: Yes, there was just my brother Robert, my brother Wallace here, and my kid sister and I. The other two had already gone--my sisters Katherine and Mabel were attending Normal School. In those days it was Territorial Normal School for teachers. Right up Captain Cook Avenue. They were living separately in another sister's home.

S: What was your kid sister's name?

G: Amy.

S: And your father came with you?

G: Yes. Anyway, two of my older brothers were married already and they lived separately. We lived in a separate part of town. We lived down on Kukui Street back of this Chinese Society. This was the main branch; the one on the Big Island was a branch. They had a lot of housing, so to speak, and we rented one of the little apartments there. By that time, my father had retired from tailoring. He used to

go next door to meet some of the men to play dominoes--not for gambling because he had no money.

I went to school at Kauluwela School on School Street. Then Central Grammar School. Central Grammar School was in one of the palaces there. Central Intermediate. It was a palace before it was knocked down. We had our arithmetic classes way up in the attic. We felt sorry for the teacher because she had a heart attack one day. A Portuguese lady. I don't know what happened. I guess we got another teacher. But it was a beautiful palace. I don't know whether it was a summer palace or not. I can't remember now. I should go and look it up. But I remember they tore it down, and from Central Grammar it went to Central Intermediate. We never had a certificate from Central Grammar, but from Intermediate. Then I went on to McKinley High School.

S: Did you have mostly haole teachers at Central?

G: No, we had a few Oriental teachers.

S: But at McKinley you had a lot of haole teachers?

G: Yes. A lot of them came from the mainland. There were one or two Oriental teachers at Central Intermediate because one of these teachers taught art. I was in the ninth grade and we couldn't take it. It was too late. I thought, "Gee, I would like to have taken that." Her name was L-O-U-I and it sounded like Louis. No, I think that it was spelled L-O-U-I-S, but it was supposed to be L-O-U-I, but because of the discrimination, I think, we always wondered why she was called Louis when she was Chinese. That I remember.

We had a very nice class in Central Grammar School. Then we went on to Intermediate because it was seventh, eighth, and ninth grades. We took turns in the cafeteria. We were allowed to work once a month in the cafeteria because we got a free lunch, although the lunch plates were only a nickel. But we just loved to work because you could eat all you wanted.

In those years we had a nice--because I guess the schools were small in those days--we would make hikes and picnics ourselves and we'd go on hikes up Manoa Cliffs, Manoa Falls, Manoa caves.

S: You didn't know at the time they were field trips. (laughs) That's what they call them now.

G: Right. Field trips. The Manoa trolley went up as far as Oahu Avenue. I don't know what the side street would be, but it would stop right there and we'd walk up. But Samuel Wilder King, who is now the judge, because he went on to Punahou after Central Intermediate, was a classmate of mine

in that class. Some of them have passed on now, but he was a little rascal. He had one eye, the left eye I think, because he'd had an injury when he was very young. But he had a glass eye and he'd take it out once in a while, clean it, and put it back. He took Japanese when he was in school --he took classes after school--and he can speak Japanese fluently even now. We always enjoyed him. I don't think he'd remember me now because it was way back.

If there were enough of us to say, "Let's have a reunion," like Royal School, a school that was opposite us--they still have a reunion yet like a high school. They still are having reunions every two years. But those years were spent very quietly, except for those hikes. I spent a lot of time going to the library and reading a lot.

S: Was the library downtown on King Street?

G: Yes. It was a long walk, but I had to make it because we couldn't afford the trolley fare. When I told my father I was going to the library, I would take a banana or something because I knew I would be there for hours. When I'd get there, I would be lost in reading all those Hawaiian fables and so on. I used to borrow so many books, go home and read them, and in a few days be back again. My father would say that I was studying so hard.

In between I would crochet. In those days they didn't have directions. You would learn it orally from people. One of my sisters-in-law was trying so hard to teach me to crochet and sometimes we would be so tired and forget. You don't write it down and they would call you stupid and dumb. You would end up crying and you would never want to crochet again. Later on they had a few books, but I think it was much later because I remember one summer my sister Katherine --this sister Mabel and the one below her Katherine were teaching on Kauai--and Katherine (I hate to say this) was fussy. She was so fastidious and everything else. She confined my sister and I on hot summer days to crochet doilies for her cottage on Kauai. And my sister and I--there was all this crocheting and it just bugged us.

It was a good thing that where we lived--it's now known as Liliuokalani Gardens--on School Street that was known as Waikahalulu Falls, and we lived right before that and we could hear the waterfall from our house. When it was hot enough, we would go over there. The kids would be swimming in the nude and all that. We enjoyed it very much. That was the only consolation that we had.

Then there were a lot of vegetable gardens where the Chinese had taro and watercress. We would go and buy for five cents a bunch--watercress. My sister-in-law would say, "Go to the garden and buy a bunch of watercress for dinner

tonight," or maybe for breakfast. For breakfast we didn't have cereals in those days. It was unknown. What we ate was a big pot of rice. At that time, you see, my two brothers lived in two separate homes in one complex and then they got my father to come and live with them in another. We lived in another house. There were times when we got together to eat together. Somehow, I think, that we had some meals there, but we lived on this side.

So my sister-in-law would say, "Go and get a bunch of watercress," or ung choy--that's marsh vegetable--or some other kind of vegetable that they had there or mustard cabbage or some other kind of cabbage. What we would eat was maybe a can of pork and beans, rice and the one bunch of cabbage that we picked up. Stir fried. That was our breakfast. Hardly any meat for breakfast. I think that's why I'm having so much trouble with the root canal--I didn't get enough of that complete diet. Although in school, they would give us cod liver oil. You would bring one penny and you got a tablespoon of cod liver oil. I don't know if it was every day or three times a week.

S: They figured this was like a dietary supplement. Isn't that interesting?

G: Yes. Kauluwela School and Waipahu School, I remember. Oh, that was awful tasting. They would give us a slice of orange to suck on after that. But, oh, that cod liver oil. Well, that wasn't as bad as castor oil.

When we were children on the Big Island, every Saturday morning we would get a big dose of castor oil. Yuck. The three of us--a tablespoon of castor oil and then taking an orange or some kind of fruit. That was our laxative every week. Because my sister never knew what we ate.

S: Whether you needed it or not. (laughs)

G: Well, I'll tell you--in our stream we had a lot of frogs, and a lot of catfish and what you call opae. And we used to go fishing and there was a lot of grass around these big rocks. Wandering jew. Honohono grass they called it. We didn't have TV in those days. We didn't have radio. What were we going to do to kill time? We would do anything under the sun to stay out of mischief. Of course, a lot of times we got into mischief. So we would go fishing and we'd get some opae. We'd take a little empty can and start a fire alongside the stream and we'd cook the opae and eat it there. Well, we weren't supposed to. So that's why the castor oil. My sister would say, "You never know what you've been eating the whole week."

You know there were a lot of wild things in those days. There used to be something that looked like white turnips

that grew wild. The leaves would look like little clover, but it had a white radish. Round. We'd go around looking for that and eat that. Of course, when they were in season, there would be mountain apples and things like that. Along the way to my sister's house the mountain apple trees used to be real tall. It was too tall to reach, so we just shook the tree and they'd fall down. Those were the few things that we could do.

Except as I said, we'd go swimming in the swimming hole and then I'd get a licking, as I said, because I squealed on them. Or to the beach. It was really something if we all went to the beach. The beach was not too far away. My sister would pack a picnic basket with potato salad--I loved potato salad--with homemade mayonnaise. They learned all the cooking from the Kohala School. So we were not hungry. We always had food because there was so much in the yard, vegetables and things like that.

If you consider that my father wasn't really poor, because he had all those things--he was able to order all the groceries from Honolulu, we were considered pretty well-off. Look how we dressed (displays family picture). We were not poverty stricken or anything like that.

It just was hard when we came to Honolulu and my father was retired and we had to look for a source of income to the two sisters who were teaching, and we had to pinch pennies. Thank goodness, that lunches were cheap. It was only five cents a plate even when I went to McKinley High School. There were days that I had to pay dues to a club that I belonged to. Maybe it was twenty-five cents a year. I had to skip lunch maybe twice a week to get that money because I didn't dare ask my father.

If you asked him for some money, "What do you need the money for?" "I need to buy a new pencil. New tablet." "You used it all up already?" Even sanitary napkins. That was the hardest thing to tell my father, because my mother had passed on. Finally, I had to go to my sister-in-law and they had things in Chinatown that were made out of handmade paper instead of birdseye diapers. That sort of stuff. So it made it very hard in my teenage years. It really was an adjustment.

Then in 1929--when I graduated from high school that was 1933--and the Depression years--the 1929 crash had come and it was very, very hard. When we graduated, we didn't even have--we had a prom--but no corsages, no leis. My sister went to all the trouble and made a dress for me and sent it down from Kauai. Even the graduation was very simple, too. No flowers or nothing because it was Depression years. We are now celebrating our fifty-fourth reunion next year.

S: McKinley had a pretty large student body at that time.

G: That was the only school. The only high school in those years.

S: Well, Roosevelt started around 1931, but they wouldn't have been graduating yet. What about Leilehua?

G: No, they didn't until much later. So ours was the only school. When you think of all those well-known people like Senator Fong and all those, they were from McKinley High School because they had to go there. Then in 1933 I couldn't get a job. I worked in Kress Store part-time when I was in school. Maybe only the weekends on Saturdays. It was hard to find jobs.

Summertimes--let me go back a little bit--at the age of sixteen you could get a job working in the cannery, but I even had a hard time because I was so tiny. I always had to stand on my toes and look tall. Every time I would not get picked I was so disappointed. Finally, somebody let me--one of my sisters knew somebody who worked in the Del Monte cannery side where you have all the labels and that was a tough job. We got more pay, but because we were so young they had a special table for us and only worked us half a day. The cans were so heavy to get four cans and put into the cases.

I only worked there a few weeks. I couldn't work in the cannery where they canned the regular pineapples because I got so sick. I got so seasick looking at that thing rolling. (laughs) I just couldn't work there. When I went to the cannery I was all right, but I got sick. I don't know what I got--a bad cold or pneumonia or what. But all that money went for doctor bills. My father said that it was just a waste of time for me to go to work. It was a long walk from School Street to Iwilei. I walked every morning and walked home. That ended it.

Then I tried to do housework part-time. It was terrible. Two or three dollars a week. Not room and board either. I went home every night. Sometimes I had to ask them for bus or trolley fare. They didn't want to give it. And you did everything. Even on Saturdays and you would wash like this old style--no washing machines. Hang all these sheets up and iron.

S: That was when you ironed sheets and you ironed pillow cases.

G: Right. And that was for three dollars a week. Then after graduation I still worked for fifteen dollars a month or twenty dollars a month. Twenty dollars a month was good pay. Finally, I got so disgusted I talked to my two sisters.

I wanted to go to the University, but they said they couldn't afford it. They were starting their families and all. I felt very bad. They didn't have scholarships in those days. Very few. One sister had gone one summer to take hairdressing and said, "Why don't you go to Los Angeles to take hairdressing? In six months you'll be a full-fledged hairdresser."

I had to recruit money from her and another sister, and at that time I was going with a Chinese craftsman and he said he would help me. My father wanted us to get married and I said, "No, I don't want to get married." I didn't know how sure he was. I'm glad I didn't because things didn't turn out.

Anyway I went up there and it was a struggle again. Food was cheap and all that, but the money was not coming in regularly each month. I lived with two other girls and it was so hard. Then I met my first husband.

S: What year was this when you went to the hairdressing school?

G: Nineteen thirty-six. I was almost through--almost ready to take my state license and all that, and I met this Chinese fellow from Honolulu. He had been away for many years. He spoke my same dialect, but he looked like a Filipino and I didn't like him at all in the beginning. I just didn't like him. But his friend--also same dialect--chauffeured for some movie mogul and this one that I married worked as a bar-tender for Don the Beachcomber. He started there in Hollywood. He was persuasive. I fell in love with him, and before I knew it I got married. I never finished beauty school.

S: You were at an age where you were probably homesick.

G: And the money was not coming in. Even though the food was so cheap. At the city market you could get one head of lettuce for a penny, one head of celery for a penny, ten cents for a pound of stew, twenty-five pounds of potatoes for ten cents, I think it was. I had to get a Chinese boy--a wealthy boy from here who had a car--and we used to get him to take us to the market every Sunday. We told him, "We'll cook the dinners for you, if you will do that." I was the cook, one of the girls washed the dishes and cleaned house, and the other one did the laundry. But that was very hard.

I got married and the next thing you know I was pregnant and I couldn't continue school. But still at that time times were hard even though he worked for Don the Beachcomber. Don the Beachcomber was starting on McCadden Place in Hollywood. Hollywood was very small at that time. It was just a few blocks away from Graumann's Chinese where the people had

their footprints. Hollywood Theater and Hollywood Hotel were still there on Hollywood Boulevard.

Anyway, it was a struggle for Don the Beachcomber, too, because he was just starting. He would make enough money for certain drinks--a bottle of rum for these zombies and stuff--and as soon as he had enough money--they'd be running out of liquor--he'd send somebody down to the liquor store to buy another bottle of liquor.

S: That's really operating on a shoestring.

G: He was going with a Swedish girl at that time and married her a few months later. A beautiful blond. She was at the cashier's all the time, but as soon as they had enough money, they'd run to the liquor store. But they made good money because it was something different. Tropical. They had a waterfall and thunder and a little grass shack outside. This was in the lobby of a hotel and he had this little grass shack next door. Little artifacts and things like that. He was the biggest con man.

Well, he's too old now. But he was my best man. For our wedding he was our best man and he gave me away, too, because he was my husband's boss at the time. Somebody in the movie industry had given me a beautiful wedding dress. So we were real lucky because times were very bad.

S: But you didn't know your husband-to-be very long?

G: About three months. Then he was so persuasive. "You're such a good cook," and this and that. "Why don't we get married?" At first I didn't want to and my two girlfriends didn't like the idea and all that, but by that time I was in love, and with all these financial troubles I thought I might as well get married. I wrote to my boyfriend back home that I had met somebody else, so why don't you go ahead and get married.

Then his life went different and his mother always blamed me that I had changed his life. When I came back after World War II, many years later, she said, "Why don't you divorce him and marry my son," because by that time he had divorced his wife. I said, "No, I can't do that," because I was still married to my husband.

Then we lived in Hollywood and I don't know what happened but he had a break with the Beachcomber. They had some differences, so he left there. He had a hard time getting a job because of being an Oriental. Oh, those days! Even finding a house was hard. In those days they had a lot of those dime-a-dance halls where they had a lot of Filipinos going at night. The minute that we would go to look for a house they thought we were Filipinos already and they'd say,

"No." Or if they'd take our deposit and we'd go back the next day they'd say, "I'm sorry, but the neighbors saw you here. We can't rent to you." There was that much discrimination already. That was between 1936 and 1939. He went from job to job because it was so hard. He tried to open his own business and couldn't make a go of it.

S: And, in the meantime, you had the twins.

G: Right. Finally, we went to do some housework for the heirs to the Burroughs typewriter people. We went away from our friends and all that to catch up with our debts. Then he went to work for Monte Prosser, who opened the Copacabana. Monte Prosser wanted to open a Beachcomber in New York City. He talked my husband into going and he got a lot of the bartenders and the chefs. A whole crew of us moved to New York in 1939. Nineteen thirty-nine, forty, forty-one and the war started.

Discrimination wasn't as bad there as it was in California. We didn't have a hard time finding housing because people that we knew were in the nightclub business and they didn't segregate so much. My kids went to school where they had a lot of Puerto Ricans at that time. We were near the West End. The funny thing was that when we lived in Hollywood, we lived across from Columbia Studios. When we went to New York, we moved to an apartment with another branch of Columbia Studios right across from it. We always seemed to be near studios or universities with stadiums. One place we lived in Los Angeles was near USC, and during the football games the traffic would be heavy. In New York we were near where Yankee Stadium was, and what's the other baseball field--Polo Grounds? Anyway, we were always near the studios or the stadiums.

He worked with Monte Prosser and opened the Beachcomber and I worked as a waitress to make ends meet. I hired a girl to take care of the boys. They went to nursery school first and then to first grade, and the war came. I quit work because he was subject to be drafted. He worked part-time at a defense job and I stayed home because we would have to pay more taxes and all that. So I stayed home and took care of the kids and was a regular housewife.

Later on, two of my nieces here opened a baby shop and I would buy things wholesale for the baby shop. I used to send things periodically and that's how I had spending money from the commission. It was very difficult because I had no car at that time. I used to take taxi cabs, and a lot of times taxi cabs would not take you if you had a lot of packages. And, oh gosh, I used to have to make two trips. I would tell the post office man I would come back later with more packages because the cab wouldn't take them.

And then I would argue with them (the post office) because they said that Hawaii was a foreign country and I had to sign foreign papers. I would say, "Hawaii is not a foreign country. It is part of the United States." They would argue and argue with me and call down to the main branch and all that. It was a hassle every time when I got a permit to send those packages. They'd say it was a foreign country. You have to pay foreign rates. It was something awful. They were so ignorant in those days. Even now...

S: I was going to say that there are still some who haven't figured out that it's a state.

G: Right.

S: Well, was your husband ever drafted?

G: No, he was lucky. We stayed on during the time of the war. There was a Presbyterian church there, and I think somehow a lady there worked and lived in China for over twenty years. She met me by accident with my boys one day and she talked to us and she recruited me. So I went to the Presbyterian church. I got involved with teaching Sunday school and with recreation--once a week what we called the "cocoa school" because we fed cocoa to the kids and they played basketball and had bible study.

I became an integral part of that church because the minister was a bachelor. A German minister who didn't know how to cook. Mabel Hall, the missionary worker, said, "You know how to cook and all that. Teach him how to bake a ham. Teach him how to make potato salad so that he will be able to entertain people." After that, it was baked ham and potato salad. Always the same menu. (laughs) We tried to make it different with vegetables and all that. I spent six years in that church teaching there until the war ended.

I decided to come back. By that time my husband and I had troubles and I got divorced in 1946. I didn't tell my boys about it for six months. It was a big blow to me. Because he was in the nightclub business he thought he had to take care of the Polish girls who came from Pennsylvania. I always say "Polish girls" and pick on the poor Polish girls but that's where all of them came because they were up from the coal mines and had no place. He was the one who was looking for jobs for them. He thought he would have to take care of them and when I found that out ...

In New York state you could only divorce on adultery and you have to have a witness. So my superintendent was my witness. When I was in Honolulu visiting my father who was eighty-nine, brought my boys home, he had this girl in with another cousin from here, another girl and then he went down to Maryland to open a restaurant for the summer with my

girlfriend and her husband. My girlfriend didn't tell me until several years later what happened, because it hurt her. She didn't like the idea, and when the divorce came into being, she still wasn't happy about it. She's Catholic and she said, "Don't do that." But I just couldn't take it any more. I came back home and brought the boys with me.

He wanted the boys himself. He said that he thought he could handle them. I said, "Not when you're in the nightclub business." There were times on his day off he would take them to town, but when the boys came home, they looked so grumpy and sad. I'd ask what had happened. "Daddy made us wait outside by the bar and he went in there and drank for so many hours." The poor kids were just left out there.

S: They were about ten years old when they came back here. Had they been over here to visit?

G: The year before I brought them to see my father. Three months later after I went back, my father passed away. He developed pneumonia and he decided that he had lived long enough. That's what he said. He told one of my nieces that he had seen my two boys and they were the only grandchildren that he had not seen. He was satisfied.

All summer (during the visit) these people... During the war the Chinese people were spoiled because the Japanese were all confined to camps and the Chinese had defense jobs, the ladies played mah-jongg, given a lot of spending money for the kids. They were just spoiled rotten. When we came back, there was party after party. For three months here I was going to lunches and dinners and, some instances, I went to breakfast because I couldn't make it to fit my schedule. That's how many relatives and friends I had. Everybody was trying to outdo each other. Trying to give parties. After I learned about it, I felt bad.

S: A lot of people in Honolulu made money during the war.

G: I know, except the Japanese who were sent to concentration camps. We were living on ration books and scrimping and scraping. I'd tell my two kids to eat everything on their plates because think of all the people who don't have food. It got to be a bore after while. They learned that. Even until today they teach their children not to waste any food.

When I came back, I worked part-time at the church as a secretary. The church had some apartment units.

S: Which church was this?

G: First Chinese Church across from McKinley High School. My pastor there was a very good friend of mine. I had known

him and his wife for many years. They had visited us in New York City when he took some courses and got his master's or something at Hartford Seminary. It wasn't far from New York so we were able to visit each other often. As soon as he found out we were back he said to come and work as part-time secretary. So I did.

Then my niece wanted a part-time salesperson for the baby shop. They still had the baby shop. Later on I went to work for Hawaiian Manufacturing Company for one of my relatives, which was a very bad mistake. Never work for relatives. They work you to the bones.

S: What kind of manufacturing was this?

G: This was Hawaiian wear owned by a Chinese family. It was my brother-in-law's family. The wife was a partner, but she was a holy terror. She made me a forelady for all the ladies who were doing all the sewing. They expanded pretty well for the couple of years I worked there, but then they expanded too well. When the husband wanted to give me a raise, she didn't want to. She thought I should be forever grateful.

I rested a few months drawing unemployment insurance and then I went to Sears, applied for a job and got it. I knew about knitting and all that. I talked to the manager there and told her that I could show the customers how to knit and crochet. She was very pleased with that. We xeroxed copies for directions for the customers. I stayed at Sears for twenty-two and a half years. Later on, of course, I became a decorator.

END OF TAPE 1/SIDE 2

At her McCully Street home, Honolulu, Hawaii

September 12, 1986

S: This morning I'd like you to talk a little bit about your personal life, about your twin boys and how they adjusted to life back here in Honolulu, and then we'll move on to your adventures in the academic world.

G: When we came back in 1947, which was after World War II, my boys entered the Robert Louis Stevenson School, which was an English standard school at that time. It was in the lower Punchbowl area. They had skipped from the fourth to the sixth grade from a private school in New York City that was also called Robert Louis Stevenson School. (laughter)

When they came here, the curriculum was about one year behind and my one boy was so bored because he had to repeat the same subjects all over again. I told him, "Well, just

take it and be satisfied with it. You can't be advanced another year because that would be too much ahead. In fact, I thought that skipping one year wasn't very good for them. I didn't think that socially it was very good for them, but the teacher felt that they were so advanced that's what we did.

After three years, they went on to Roosevelt High School and Roosevelt was also another English standard school. They did very well there. In those years, betweeen 1952 and 1954, I worked for a relative who owned a Hawaiian manufacturing factory for aloha wear. I did not start work at Sears until 1955. But they got me hooked as the secretary for the Parent-Teachers Association. In those days they had a lot--I guess every school had that--they were so gung ho--the associations in helping the children. Bazaars at the end of the year and raising funds. I got hooked into that secretaryship for two years and I don't think we had many meetings. Maybe twice a year. Roosevelt High School, being that the majority of the families were of better incomes, they were very willing to donate money instead of having a bazaar. So we cut that out and, thank goodness, because bazaars are a lot of work.

We had that every year at our church. It was a two-day bazaar and it was time-consuming plus a luau every year for twenty years and it was work, work, work for the central committee. The reason that I got hooked into that secretaryship was that I told the secretary of that school that I was so busy working and also with Sunday school and all that. She said, "Well, I'm pregnant now and if you don't take it, I will have to take it and I don't think I'd like that very much." Later on I found out that she was in with the Chinese Women's Club and all the social stuff.

S: What were the boys' names?

G: The boys are Robert--he's the one who graduated from Harvard Law School--and Raymond graduated from University of Wisconsin. Only one of them could get a scholarship from Roosevelt High School because they said they didn't have enough money to give the both of them. I think that created a bit of dissension between the two boys. It was very rough. I don't think they understood very well in those days and it was tough.

Raymond was kind of lackadaisical about going to college but then he decided he wanted to go into the service. At that time he was only seventeen and he couldn't go in the Army. He went down there to sign, but they told him he must have his mother come. For several weeks he didn't want to approach me, but finally his brother told me. I went and signed him in because I thought it would be good for him. It

was a good life for him. It changed him. When he came out he went to the University of Gettysburg in Pennsylvania.

Then Robert went to the University of Maryland where he studied his last two years and then decided that he wanted to go to Harvard. I said that if he wanted to go to Harvard, I would help him. That's how I became a decorator at Sears because the job paid better and I needed more money to allocate to him each month. When Raymond came out a couple of years later, even though he had the GI Bill and money coming from there, it wasn't enough, so I subsidized some of it. So there were two boys that I had to help support.

They left my nest so to speak. I lived alone on Kapiolani Boulevard. I managed about twenty apartments for my girlfriend while my boys were still here, but when they left, my girlfriend sold the apartments, so I just stayed on in the apartment and worked at Sears.

Someone introduced me to my second husband. He was a widower with two girls--one sixteen and one eleven. It took me a long time to decide whether I should marry. I should have known better, but I guess the Lord just said, "Go ahead." It was hard in the beginning. The older girl went away after one year. She had studied at the Honolulu Academy of Arts. She had to take the basics there in order to enter Chicago Institute of Art. She passed her projects. They had to send in five portfolios of maybe a charcoal or oil, a self-portrait, a watercolor. She submitted those and got in with another girlfriend. Off she went to Chicago, leaving the one younger girl home with me. She had been adopted by my husband and his wife.

Meanwhile, we had renovated this house. We had lifted this house up and put three apartment units on the ground floor. This house was built since 1936 and has held up very well. The older portion held up better than the new portion. The woods were so good. I don't think the termites could get into the wood. Even for the carpenters to hammer a nail, they grumbled. The wood was so hard.

This was all swamp area. Were you here when they had the trolleys? (S nods negatively) The streetcars used to go across from here where Times market is now. The Punahou streetcar used to end there and then you'd get on to another one that took you to Waikiki. The tracks would run over the swamp area and over the Ala Wai. You could feel the vibration and you'd look down. You could fall off because there was no railing on the tracks there. That's how you went to Waikiki to the end up at Kapiolani Park.

Before that--the end of Ala Wai where the golf course is now--is where they had the Hawaii State Fair every year. The trolleys would come by here and go around and we'd just cross

over a little bridge into the State Fair every year. Later on, they had the golf course there.

Anyway, my boys went on to school. Robert got through at Harvard and Raymond went to the University of Wisconsin. Meanwhile he had married and had a little baby and continued school. He had a cyst in one of his vocal cords which irritated him so badly that he wanted to divorce his wife and child because he didn't want them anymore. It made him so highly irritated.

In 1959 my stepdaughter from Chicago Art Institute came back to visit her father because he wasn't feeling too good. I said, "Bring Julie, my granddaughter, back." She stayed with me here for one year while my son recuperated and got through with his schooling. His wife came back with the baby and went back after a few weeks. Then she went back to school for a few months in Chicago, but then she got pregnant and Jon, my grandson, came and I sent Julie back in 1960.

In 1957 my husband and I were married. We decided to get married after we had this house renovated. It wasn't easy marrying a man with two children, even though one went away. For three years they had no mother and my husband had spoiled them. It was up to me to undo all the things that they were not supposed to do. It was very hard.

S: In that situation you really end up feeling like the wicked stepmother.

G: I was known as the wicked stepmother. (laughs) Or the Madame. They called me the Madame. I did a lot of sewing in those days for my stepdaughter and my granddaughter while she was here. Everything I did first had to be for the stepdaughter, because otherwise she would just pout. In order to make things easier everything she got first, and I would explain to little Julie. She was very petite. She was only two at the time. I would explain that I would make it for her auntie first and then for her. Fine. It was always fine with her. Because she was petite, it took very little material, scraps of material, to make her little muumuus and shorty muus. In those days they had the Suzie Wong muumuus with the little slits over here (side of thighs).

She went to a baby-sitter every day while I worked at Sears. In that way, my son got better. When he went back, he still hadn't graduated. It took him two more years. It slowed him down when he had a family. He had to work part-time and support the family. I helped subsidize the income.

My son at Harvard stayed in New York and worked at various places on Wall Street as an attorney in the corporate field. He didn't marry until much later on--in 1970, I think, when he was thirty-six years old. Everybody thought

he wouldn't get married. When he came back for vacation here, everybody would try to bring and invite girls and he'd get very embarrassed.

S: Matchmaking, of course.

G: Later on, he married a local girl. I'm not going into this because some parts were very ugly. But both of them ended up with divorce. I'm not going to delve into that.

I continued to work at Sears as a decorator and that was not an easy job. At the same time, I continued doing my work in Sunday school at the First Chinese Church on King Street across from McKinley High School.

S: That was where you had worked as a secretary for a while when you first returned to Honolulu.

G: Yes, and I sang in the choir and was a member of the Church Board and held many chairmanships for so many committees. I think that all churches have a tendency when you first come back from somewhere, or you join the church as a born again Christian, they work you like a work horse. They used to say don't kill a good horse. They do that with all new members and I think that was a very bad situation. I continued teaching and working with the church work for about thirty-three years in all. Six years in New York and then back here.

We moved to Hawaii Kai. In January 1968, my husband died. Just five months before that we had put a down payment on a house there because we were looking for a house where he could easily drive to and from work. His office was down at Fort and Beretania Streets. At that time, we didn't have the mall there. He wanted to find an easy way so he could drive straight down and get to the parking lot.

But five months prior to his death the doctor said that his diabetes was so bad that his heart and kidneys were failing and would I like to confine him to a rest home. I said, "Oh no, please don't tell him that. Don't tell him that he only has five months to live or he'll die right in your office here." So we kept that from him. Because we had the down payment on the house I couldn't withdraw that and this was up in Hawaii Kai below Kaiser High School and where the Hawaii Kai Fire Station is.

S: Right on Lunalilo Home Road?

G: Yes, this road that we lived on was Kapaia Street. Beyond that was just all wilderness. A month and a half after he passed away I moved in. Prior to his death, every day I would try to make my appointments so that I could come home and see that he got his lunch. If I had appointments in

the country, I would either make it early in the morning or late in the afternoon. We air-conditioned the house so that he'd be comfortable because he wanted a lot of air. He had a little heart trouble, but he didn't have any more high blood pressure when he got his diabetes, which is very strange, but he had this heart condition.

I noticed for the last three or four months his eyes were getting--they would swell from the uremic poisoning. He worked on his taxes for his business. He was a wholesale manufacturers' representative and they would call and he would order the things for them and the salesmen would come here. He would conduct business here. Somehow he sensed that he would go pretty soon. He did his taxes and everything two days before he died. He told me, "I've got it all finished now."

Then there was some insurance company that had upped his insurance. Because he worked for wholesalers, they all had insurance in small amounts from various places--North Carolina, South Carolina. For these wholesalers they would pool it all together. Like HMSA. They would pay the medical bill. If you go in as a group, it was much cheaper. He said to me that this certain company had upped the insurance from $1,500 to $3,000 and I would get that when he died.

I said, "Don't say that." It was unfortunate that I had my vacation right after Christmas or during the Christmas holidays, and then I got the flu the week before he passed away. I was flat on my back, but then I would get myself up to heat up the food for him. He would say. "You have to take care of your health because when I die, nobody else will take care of you." That has always been in my mind. I live alone but no matter what--I always eat a good meal. I would cook a good meal because my husband said that you have to take care of yourself.

That has always stuck in my mind. Some of my friends--when their mate passed away--you know what they did? They just ate sandwiches. They didn't want to cook. Even though they had a daughter, a married daughter or a son, they would say, "Oh, I just don't bother. I eat a sandwich." I said, "That I will eat at lunchtime, but for dinner I will eat a whole meal." My salad and soup or entree and all that. I will go all out and go to the trouble.

S: But he sensed, even though nobody told him, that he didn't have very long. How old was he when he died?

G: Sixty-eight.

S: That's young.

G: Yes. He was born in 1900 and died in 1968. He was the nicest and kindest man I ever met. Big and hefty. When he got his diabetes, he came down from 195 pounds to about 155. He lost all that weight. But he had kept the books and everything so well for his business that when it was time to go to the CPA and the attorney, they said that there was no problem because he had kept the books all in order. I had no trouble.

From his system I followed (although I'm not a very good accountant by any means), but I followed his system for the rentals and all that. So every year when I present the papers to the accountant, they say it's good. I did everything that I was supposed to do.

Of course, from time to time they change the rules and regulations. Then with social security--the earnings and all that it seems that I'm still paying taxes up until now. They tell me that when you reach the age of seventy , ou don't have to pay any taxes. You keep raising the rentals here and give myself a raise for managing the place. That is no good because I still have to pay taxes.

Coming back to Sears as a decorator. That was my sole income. As a decorator you're known as a "big ticket" person like the people who sell appliances. We work on straight commission, although we get a draw every week on whatever we make. If we don't make it, if we end up in the red, we have to subsidize it another time when we make a little more money. It balances out.

As a decorator it was very rough because when I first got there I think I was about the third person who started as a decorator. That was in the old Sears Store, which is now the Honolulu Police Station. There was another one downtown before World War II. In 1959 they prepared to move to Ala Moana. Everybody grumbled about the transportation. How are we going to get to work? How are people going to come to buy things? The busses didn't come in. Now you can see that it's worked out well, but at the time we complained about how we were going to get to work.

S: How long did you stay out in Hawaii Kai?

G: I stayed out in Hawaii Kai for nine and a half years.

S: Oh, then you had to commute from Hawaii Kai to Sears?

G: Well, I did. I had my car because a decorator had to have a car to carry all the samples and I had to commute. In

the beginning it was terrible. It would take me an hour to get to work. Finally, I got smart. I'd make my appointments on the Kailua side or the Hawaii Kai side and stay there until the traffic got better. From eight o'clock on it was fine. So I used to take all these calls in the country and making all that crazy traffic and no cones in the street and all that. Only two lanes. And I'd reverse sometimes and make my calls in Kailua or Waimanalo and come back the other way, and I didn't hit the traffic.

That commuting was something else. Everybody grumbled. There were a lot of people who pooled, but with me it was very difficult. I did bring somebody in some mornings because she lived on the same street. That I did, but I told her that she'd have to get someone else because sometimes I'm going to go elsewhere rather than get to work first.

As a decorator there was a lot of paperwork to be done. Five copies of an order whether it was just one bedspread or a whole house of draperies and furniture. Everything had to be in five copies like the Army or the Navy. It was a lot of writing.

S: And that was before the computer days, so everything had to be detailed.

G: Oh, yes. Everything had to be written and sketches drawn of where the draperies were to be. I worked with thirty-six decorators in all because every one of them dropped eventually, because they couldn't stand all that paperwork. In 1973 I took an early retirement. I retired at fifty-seven because I decided--what the heck. I just might as well take it easy. I had a little extra income here and I said I might just as well retire early. I couldn't draw on social security yet, which I did at sixty-two. I drew on my husband's social security and then later on on mine.

After I retired from Sears I took some classes. I still went to some church affairs. I went less and less because I lived so far away. And my friends (laughs)...it was really funny. On the mainland we drive fifty or a hundred miles for a cup of coffee, but here when I asked people to come to Hawaii Kai, "Oh, you live so far away." It's only eleven miles from Ala Moana to where I lived. I'd say, "In fifteen minutes you'd get up there," but for them it was way out in the country. They'd refuse to come out to my place.

A couple of times when I belonged to this University Women's Extension Club--it's right around the corner here--I'd have them over to my house. I'd tell them to bring pot luck lunch and we'd have our projects, which they liked very much. There used to be a lettuce garden and a rose garden right below Kaiser High School. You could get all this lettuce for twenty-five cents a bag--about five or six heads

of lettuce. When they knew they were coming up, the ladies would ask me to buy ahead for them on that particular day. They'd come up and buy some Chinese cabbage and so forth, and I'd have all this lined up. I'd tell the lady the day before that I'd need so many bags of lettuce and she'd have it all ready for me. Well, they liked that, but they would not come every week because they said, "Oh, you live so far away." They felt their whole day was gone when they came up.

I decided then that I was losing a lot of friends that way. (laughs) Then I attended some classes at the Academy of Arts--the ceramics which I had wanted to do for many, many years. I wanted to do some weaving because one of my nieces had taught at the Diamond Head School for the Deaf and Blind. She taught them cooking, weaving, ceramics and all that. Whenever my nieces (some of them were older than I am and they were in the teaching professions) had family parties, they would always get themselves in a corner and talk about these things they were doing in school and I always felt left out. I had nothing to do with it because I didn't know anything about it. I decided that when I retired I was going to all these things, so that I could converse with them and so forth. I took that ceramics first at the Academy of Arts. They had no weaving then.

Then with the Women's Clubs, I taught them a lot of crafts. That was really not art work; it was craft work. We made things practically out of nothing. What I mean is we would get detergent bottles and use that as a stand for the Hawaiian dolls. Two or three months before Christmas we went to various libraries like Moiliili or Kaimuki or Liliha libraries and several of us would learn all these crafts that they wanted to give to the public. We'd xerox copies of these Christmas decorations and so forth. I did that. Before that we'd have a seminar. There would be twenty-five or twenty-six clubs from Hawaii Kai to Waipahu. A representative would come from each place and bring whatever they thought might go well with the public, and simplify it because they were beginning to have a lot of senior citizens at the time.

Our club was the one that had the most things because our club was a very big organization. We had more than twenty-five. Because I was more advanced than other, because I would foresee a lot of things that I thought they could use and I worked with a lot of natural fibers and things that I thought they could use--throwaways. Even in the medical field, my daughter-in-law and granddaughter would pick up a lot of things from Straub Clinic--these little things that they had for medicine and strip syringes and all that. We'd pick those up and even the little flashcubes--we didn't waste those. We took sequins and glue and tassels and they looked like little decorations.

There was one year when Mayor Fasi had all these Christmas trees at Honolulu Hale. At all the different parks the children would make these trees. They'd all go there and they'd award prizes. There would be one director in charge every year. When I showed all these flashcubes--I had a neighbor who worked at Sea Life Park--she put a great big box, "Deposit your old flashcubes here," as the tourists went to take pictures. So these other people went to hotels and all over looking for these.

Manoa, I think, that year decorated a tree with all these flashcubes. This one man, I think his name was Miller, was in charge that year. When my girlfriend and I came in he said, "You must go over to that tree. That's all the flashcubes." My girlfriend looked at me and I looked at him. I said, "Yes, I know about it because I was the one who started it." He felt so embarrassed. I said that he shouldn't be embarrassed because all the places did do that later on. They'd take one or two to make them longer and they looked like little lanterns. They were real cute with the little tassels at the bottom with the leftover yarn. Those were the things that kept me busy.

Then when I got through with some classes at the Academy of Arts, I went out to teach. I learned high fire ceramics, but the Parks Board teaching the children and senior citizens was low fire, so that was an entirely different thing. You worked with the different glazes. When I asked the teacher there she said, "You work the same way," but I had to learn the hard way. I had to experiment.

Meanwhile I bought myself a kiln because I was still living in Hawaii Kai and my neighbor converted a double carport into a craft room for me and then built another carport because I had enough space. My family would get together maybe once a month and make ceramics. Then we'd have pot sales once a year just before Christmas. We'd take these things and scatter them all over the different areas in Hawaii Kai. Even Kalama Valley. It was very successful because we had everything under the sun, so to speak. Some people did the ceramic pots with hangings. Different people doing different things. Five or six craftspeople. Everybody made money. We said it was a garage sale, so that we didn't have to pay any taxes or gross income on that.

After teaching senior citizens in Aina Haina and teaching several other classes of teenagers on Friday nights for about fourteen weeks, we had a family night where the family brought the husband and wife, or the mother brought her children and we would have different crafts. Ceramics for so many weeks and then we did other things. And macrame. I have one picture on the wall there--the lady had all these children with the hula hoops and all these things going on. That was all right but, you see, I was giving all my input to

them and I wasn't getting any back so I felt that I was being depleted and I had to go out and do something else.

I thought that I would go to the School of Continuing Education at night for certain crafts and when I spoke to the director--by accident someone sent me to the director of the senior citizens and the university at Manoa. He told me I was at the wrong place--this was not the School of Continuing Education--this was for senior citizens. I asked him to explain himself. I told him about retiring and all that and said that I had always wanted a college degree but my family couldn't afford it. He said, "You can come back for a college degree anytime." This had started in 1975 and I didn't know about it. He said, "Oh yes, you can come back and it's tuition free."

I said that I would never be able to take the entrance exam because it's been many years that I've been away from school. He said, "No, you don't do that. You just merely make twenty-four credits with a good grade, a B average, and then you automatically become a candidate for a bachelor's degree." For senior citizens. It was easy. I don't know whether it's easy or not, but I had to go through all the essential subjects (laughs) humanities, math, psychology, all that. I made my twenty-four and then applied for the bachelor of fine arts.

I told Dr. Goodrich that I wanted weaving. That was my chief concern. Then I found out that you couldn't take weaving until you had done some basics first. Some of what they call the studio foundation. I think I had to take five or six classes before. So I had to wait a year and a half before I could take my weaving class.

Meanwhile, the weaving teacher had seen me with some weaving things like a backpack. I had woven that and made myself a backpack. Before I went back to school there was a teacher from the School of Continuing Education who one summer taught fourteen weeks of backstrap loom, and I took it because one of my friends decided that she could not take it.

She said, "Don't go and apply because the class is already closed, but go under my name." So I went under her name as Edith Yamamoto. I told the teacher, "I'm not Edith Yamamoto, but I'll take her place." This teacher was very good and I took to the backstrap. Several of us bought backstraps, but then later on we made our own out of yardsticks and dowels. Then she extended that to another fourteen weeks, which made us very happy, because on the second phase of the fourteen weeks she taught other things like off-the-loom class where you did basketry, macrame, crochet--all these other things that were related to fiber. Plaiting and so forth.

When I went to the class there, I knew a little bit about weaving because I had a square loom at home here and I did things like cushion covers. I told my girlfriend, "Please don't tell the teacher that I know these things. Just let me go in as a novice, so that I won't make the others feel bad." Half the class were senior citizens because when you go to those classes under Continuing Education they are tuition free provided there are open spaces. As soon as we know there is a class open, we send in our application. If we get in, we get in. If we don't get in, we wait until the next session. But this teacher was very good about it. She took several of the extra senior citizens.

Anyway, I told my girlfriend, "Don't tell the teacher that I know all these things." Like macrame--I had taught all my friends macrame already. There was plaiting and the Chinese way of braiding--three to twelve strands of braiding. I found a book that had all those and xeroxed and gave them to everybody and then I sat to do it. She was so flabbergasted. "How do you know all these things?" We would come to macrame and I would come back with a big basket. "Well," I said, "I knew these things, but I didn't want to tell you. I didn't want to make the others feel bad." She said, "What am I going to teach you?" "That's all right. I still like the backstrap."

That's what made me go back to college when I found out that I could go back in 1977. This was in 1976 when I found out that I could go back, but I had some commitments with my club. We did volunteer work for the American Cancer Society and the Heart Association and we had commitments until the end of December. Instead of attending school in September, I went back in January 1977 and finished all my work at home.

When you build a new home and have your own yard and all that, you become a slave to your yard work and weeds and all that. I think my neighbor was more so. It kind of bugged me. Everything was so meticulous that I had to go--if I saw a little weed, I had to pull it.

S: You felt guilty. (laughs)

G: Yes. Anyway, it was a very nice subdivision where I lived. It was mostly young couples. One or two of them had a mother-in-law or an older person living there, but they didn't speak as much English as I did, so they did not come around as much. Then I got to be known as "the lady who knows how to do everything" on the street.

Little kids would come around for trick or treat on Halloween and they'd look around and say, "You're the lady

who knows how to do everything." It was really funny. That's how I was known. It got so that after a while down in Portlock, across the street from Koko Marina, people knew who I was. Word just spread around.

Anyway, in 1977 I started back to school. Meanwhile, my daughter-in-law, who had divorced my son many years back, had lived with me for one year (1972-1973) before I retired from Sears, moved back to Hawaii from Detroit. I said that was not a very nice place to live. Black kids were getting after my granddaughter because she was so attractive and they were big and hefty. I didn't like that very well, so I said, "Come back." They had no place to stay and I had four bedrooms in the house, so each one of them had a bedroom of their own. They lived there one year. Later on, after some trouble with my son, they moved down to Kapahulu where their grandmother had a vacant cottage there. Later on, they built a house one mile above me in Hawaii Kai. They used to bring their dog to my yard because it was an open yard and the dog could have more air. They'd give me a ride to the express and that's how I took the bus to school. The only thing that was bad was that there is no express service during mid-day and it would take me hours to get home after classes.

END OF TAPE 2/SIDE 1

S: You were saying that it took you an hour and a half to get home. That's the drawback in Hawaii Kai.

G: Right. So since I started in January, 1977, I was taking summer classes because I thought I'd like to finish college as fast as I can because I didn't take a full course like some of the students. They'd take nine or twelve or sometimes fifteen credits. It was too rough. I thought I'd take six one semester and then three and three in the summer sessions. It kept me busy.

Then the summer of 1977 I had this place rented out and the people had left. For nine and a half years I had two tenants only. One of them came back, moved to the mainland and a friend took over. Then the friend moved back to the mainland and the other one came back. But it was so rundown. They didn't tell me that a lot of things needed to be fixed and the air conditioning was broken. They didn't tell me these things. When I came in here when they moved out, there were a lot of things to be done. We had it fixed up and painted and put in a new refrigerator and a stove. By golly, it looked so nice and I thought, "Why don't I move back and school will be more convenient over here?"

So for the month of August--I had a little four-door Toyota sedan and every day I filled up that sedan, made six trips up the steps here each day. What I did was each day whatever things I brought up here, I put in place immediately

instead of just dumping it here. I took back the same boxes and replaced the things. By the time I moved here at the end of the month--on the weekends my granddaughter drove her mother's station wagon and helped me with two more trips on Saturdays and Sundays. By the end of August, I was all ready except the movers moved the big items like the sofa and the piano.

It felt good to be home here, except that it was noisy. When I first moved to Hawaii Kai from here, I couldn't sleep because it was so quiet. When I came back here, it was a little noisy, so I close the doors and the windows here. The street noise is something terrible.

I continued school for five years. It took me five years to get my Bachelor of Fine Arts. It was rough. I used to grumble to my granddaughter about it being hard and this and that, because she was attending school there, too. In fact, I had my granddaughter, a nephew, a grand nephew, and a niece all attending school. We had three generations attending school at that time. That was in 1979 when I started to write on my family, because I had taken a class on the roots of a family. I continued that and that's how I wrote that book for the family. We had a gathering in 1981--some coming from the mainland and some coming from the Big Island to participate.

Then when I got my BFA in 1981, I rested for half a year. I couldn't decide whether I wanted to get my Master of Fine Arts or not. I had to take a lot of slides of my work to present it to the committee for approval. The members of that committee were teachers that I knew, who knew my work, and so it was no problem. I was lucky.

I also was a volunteer worker for the gallery. The art gallery there is under Tom Klobe. I think one year before I graduated with my BFA I brought some lunch one day for the workers and crew. I noticed that when they went out to eat off the campus they never came back. So one time I brought lunch. The morale seemed to be good. They perked up and they worked harder. Tom Klobe decided that maybe they should have a special fund and asked if I would buy the food and cook, but I did the cooking as a volunteer worker with love--for love.

If they worked on an exhibition for two or three weeks, a very big exhibition, then sometimes they would stay up. They don't start work until four o'clock in the afternoon after classes. Then they take time out to eat at six o'clock. They go back to work until eleven o'clock, twelve o'clock, or one o'clock. The last two nights maybe all night. It was very hard. I would leave them some snacks and a pot with water for tea or coffee. So I had to make my time efficient when I knew that I could help them with that as a

volunteer worker. It worked out well, but some of the other teachers didn't like it very well. It was only my weaving teachers, because in college when you do a project, you're on your own. If I don't finish the project on time, I don't go to class. I can finish it another time.

I got to learn these years at Manoa. I got to know a lot of young people every year. It was a different group of people even from the time I started on basics--started to get my bachelor's degree. Every semester would be a different group. Maybe a few would be the same, but I would meet a lot of new people every year all those years. I've been up there nine years, so you can imagine how many I have known. Some still remember me. It's easier to remember me than for me to remember them because they all seem to look alike. (laughter)

I had a fabulous time. A lot of people have sent us questionnaires--to the senior citizens--how did you like school? did you have a rough time with the young people? did they get along with you? All mine was good. They didn't think I was telling the truth. Some of them did have a rough time. Some of them just couldn't bend. There was a generation gap, so to speak. Not only that. Some of them didn't get along with the professors. Some of them were set in their ways, so they put down a lot of squawks on the questionnaires. But mine was always favorable because I said that I had no trouble.

In fact, in ceramics, which I loved very much, too, besides weaving, I had a lot of ideas, which they didn't have, like making teapots with handles. I used some hard handles made from reed or rattan and made my own out of very hard macrame or sisal rope. They would ask me where I got them and I would tell them I'd make them myself. Things like that. At that time when I took ceramics, raku ceramics was very popular, as it is now. Raku is the one that you fast glaze with a very hot temperature. I used the low fire glazes, and the kids liked it and took to it. They asked me a lot of questions and I helped them with it. It was the idea of helping them and sometimes they had very good ideas, too.

(Displays examples of raku pottery) These are my drunken sake bottles. We helped each other. They had some good ideas, too. They were very abstract in their work. In the beginning when I took ceramics, if I didn't center on the wheel, they'd help me with it, although I had my kiln and my potter's wheel at home here. There are some days when you do well and other days when you just can't throw. That's all.

S: Well, this is true of any kind of an artist.

G: Yes, and if you can't do it, stop. Sewing is the same thing. When I used to sew a dress, if I found I was making more mistakes, I'd just drop it and go back to it the next day or several hours later.

Going back to school and working with these young people has been very good for me. Even now. when I did my graduate work, it took me a little longer--three and a half years--because I had this injury here (indicates finger) and then I switched from weaving to handmade paper. I got to like that very much. I worked with the Hawaiian fibers, the plants. That meant hunting for a lot of things out in the forest. We'd go with several people up in the mountains and pick all these things, boiling them down. A lot of that I did at home here because the sinks there were not to my proportions. They were either too high or too deep. I'd fall down in them. So I did a lot of work at home for my projects, as I did for my graduate work. Other times, if they wanted other things, I would go there and help them.

Even now, as of last week, I took two girls and we cut a lot of branches from this Hawaiian mulberry tree--it's called wauke--from one of the botany buildings there. St. John's garden. One of my professors said it's growing wild. It grows so tall since last February. I have to get a ladder or a long pruner and have somebody prune it for me. I'm still working with it. One girl I talked to yesterday is handling some folk art things at the Academy of Arts and she's quite interested in paper making. She's big and hefty and I thought that she's just the ideal girl to help me. And she wants to get more information. She wants to know how to do tapa and all that. We're just helping each other.

S: It's mutually beneficial.

G: Right. So when some of the senior citizens say--I don't want to be harsh with them--but when some of them say that they just can't stand them and this and that--and some of them in the Weaving Department--I mean, there have been several there that the young people just can't take to them. You just have to give and take.

Now I found out a new graduate came in from the mainland and she's very good with fibers. She was asking me a lot of questions about local fibers, about that mulberry that I picked the other day. How to go about it. She was very thrilled to get it. It's very hard to get. I'm about the only one who can get the source.

When I graduated last May, I worked on my thesis--the only sad thing about it is that I worked with my weaving teacher, Shore Lipsher, and we started on my thesis last

November. Suddenly, out of a clear blue sky, she had a brain tumor which was cancerous. I worked with her for several months. It was touch and go. I finally got my thesis finished because I had a deadline of April 15. There were days when she was good and days when she was bad. She was pregnant before she knew that she had this tumor. She was six months pregnant and she couldn't get any chemotherapy or laser treatment until the baby was more mature. At eight months she had a Caesarean. After that she was able to get treatment, but I think it was too far gone. All the roots had spread out. She had two or three operations after that.

I graduated and she was still that way. We learned later that it was terminal. It was just a matter of time. Meanwhile, I decided that I would go away for a little trip. I had my thesis show in November of 1985 and it took me the summer before that--six months--to work on my project--fifty great big sculptural forms.

S: Fifty!

G: Yes. Five zero. And they were as huge as I was. Anyway, I felt very fatigued. My son and his wife, who works for United Airlines, gave me a membership to the Silver Wings club for the senior citizens and you get a cut rate for your fare, your hotel, a Budget car.

A girlfriend, whom I had met in an ethnobotany class in 1979, had been coming here to the Islands from time to time. Maybe twice a year she'd come and make a trip here, and every time that she came we'd make a trip to the Big Island to pick up fibers to bring back for my work. Of course, she liked botany and ethnobotany herself. Her name is Mary West. Her children went to school with Dr. Abbott, who was on my committee, who is an ethnobotany professor. They both had children who went to school at Pacific Grove run by Stanford and then they went to Stanford University.

Mary loves Hawaii very much. She is very Hawaiiana, more so than I am. Every time she comes out here she's up at the Bishop Museum. She's looking through every book. She's taking every kind of craft work and musical instruments, making feather work and leis and all these things. Everything you can think of. She's there.

We take a week off and go to the Big Island. We've travelled there a number of times, taking one of my nieces who's now seventy-six years old, renting a cabin at Pohakaloa at the foot of Mauna Kea, because my nephew who was the propagator for the Hawaiian goose, the nene, lived right next door. We had the cabin there and he'd come over every night with his wife and eat with us.

We travelled during the day all over the island. The last day we would pick all the foliage for haku leis to bring back here from Saddle Road. We'd pack a lunch and start early in the morning and slowly pick all the things that we'd want. Then go off to Hilo. Sightsee some more and then come back to Honolulu.

Mary lives in Santa Cruz, California. This time she wanted me to come up and visit her. My son lives in San Jose. She had bugged me for so long and I said, "I think I need to get away." I did that for not quite three weeks--nineteen days. At the same time, one of my grandnephews was going to marry a Japanese girl in Oxnard on July 26. I worked my itinerary so that I got there on July 11 and spent a weekend with my son and his wife. because they both work. I just spent one weekend and we went sightseeing.

Mary picked me up the next day and she had a long list of things she wanted me to do. She wanted me to see a paper-maker and then a basket maker and an eighty-four year old lady who raises about forty sheep and angora goats. Ann Blinks is her name and she's full of vitality. Her husband is professor emeritus at the Stanford University at Pacific Grove. He's retired, but he goes to his office every day. (displays pictures of her visit) You look down from her studio to where the sheep are grazing. She had me going so that by five o'clock I was exhausted. She didn't stop.

S: Well, she figured you were just a youngster.

G: That's what she said to me, "You're just a kid yet." I had to laugh. These are her spinning wheels and some of the fleece that she has carded. Each one of her sheep has a name. She has written a book on Peruvian weaving and on one page several people had commented that when you go to visit Ann Blinks, you are exhausted for two days. I believe it because she exhausted me for that one day.

She lives down by Carmel. Not Carmel by the sea, but up in the mountains. It's nice and cool up there. It was just beautiful, but she exhausted me. I told Mary, and Mary laughed.

S: Mary was with you on this excursion? (G nods affirmatively) And how old is Mary?

G: I really don't know. Mary must be around fifty-five. I don't ask. I kind of surmised she's about that age. She has a daughter who's a veterinarian now, because her husband's a veterinarian. Her other daughter is with marine biology. She's got a Ph.D.

S: I was just wondering if Mary was in her seventies, too.

G: No, she's younger. She does all the driving for me. I let her drive.

Coming to this papermaker. We found out that he was an older man. Seventy-eight years old and he was experimenting with a lot of plants--like I do--but with California plants. He had a funny situation. He puts them all in files, but he doesn't label any of those. You see a sample and ask him what it is and he says, "I don't know, I don't know." I thought that was very funny.

But it is just his hobby. He took papermaking and he lives in one of these houses--like a mobile house--and he can only take five pupils at a time because his kitchen is so small. He does all his papermaking in his kitchen. I thought that was grand of him to try to teach other people. He wanted to know how to do Japanese style bookbinding. I said that I had some very good books on it. I couldn't remember the names, but when I got back I wrote to him and he was so thrilled to get it so that he can teach those people with the handmade paper.

I wore a kasuri, you know, like Japanese farmer's outfit that day and he said, "Excuse me, I'll be right back." He went into the bedroom and came out with his happi coat. (laughs) He said, "Now I feel good. I'm at home now." He'd been to Japan with his wife. His wife is not interested in papermaking at all. She's very quiet. He seems like he's English and she's Spanish or something. They were just leaving for Mexico that day. That was all that we had with him.

The next person that we went to visit was this younger girl--not quite thirty yet--between twenty-five and thirty--a tall, slim girl--and she does all these baskets out of pine needles. I bought a little sample from her--a small basket. (displays)

S: Those are pine needles?

G: She collects the ones that she wants. Sometimes they clean this part and they don't clean the other part. They dampen them, and they bunch it together and use the raffia to sew it together.

S: They smell so good, too?

G: Yes, but it makes me sick. That's the only thing.

S: Too much of it would.

G: When we went to her house she had it all in boxes. I took my mask with me and forgot all about it. When I got home that night, I was ill. And I told Mary, "You know, I forgot to wear my mask." She said that she hadn't thought about it either.

S: Yes, one small basket's fine, but if you were surrounded with it...

G: But everything looks immaculate. Like this. Each one was just so. On the wider ones, the rows would be farther apart. She had some trays. Then she asked me a lot of questions about lauhala and I showed her the books. She had one book. She said her mother had those strips and she took that strip and she made that inside rim. She used the lauhala and she attached it in there, which was a very good idea. Her mother had been here and visited on the Big Island and picked it up, so she used it. She made enough for a basket, twelve by twelve, in a couple of hours and she was so full of energy, like me.

She lives in a little cottage. You know, the University of California has several colleges on the little hills. She lived in a little gulch at the end of the road where they had a little garden and some wild rabbits and deer coming and eating all the young shoots of the string beans coming on the poles.

She holds her classes out there in the summer because it doesn't rain. She's been writing to me and I've been telling her a few things. I didn't know that it had impressed her that I told her when I saw her baskets and things that she should go into something that's a little more sculptural and different. They all look the same. If you did something a little different, it would be free form and more sculpture forms and look like art work.

She got to thinking about that and she wrote to me, "You know, you have set me on a different way with my pine baskets. I was getting a little bored because I was doing the same thing over and over." You know, row after row. So I wrote back to her and told her what books--she had some books--and I told her what pages to look for.

In the meantime, Mary had called and I told her to call Lorna and tell her this and tell her that. Take her to your house and show her some of the things you have in your house and show her how she can use some of the fibers there. That

keeps Mary busy, too. Mary's husband goes to bed very early because he's a veterinarian and he gets up at three o'clock in the morning, so seven o'clock he's in bed. So she's all alone at night. Her daughter, who's a veterinarian also, goes to bed early.

So we are passing information back and forth to Lorna. She asked me to send some pictures of my sculpture work--the baskets and things like that. There are some books that she has and I'm just going to tell her what pages to look up. She can get an idea. These (indicating one of her baskets) are really not art things. They are just ordinary things that I made before when I was with the backstrap teacher. But the other ones that I have made--I have given some away--but I told her to go to Mary's because she has a couple of my pieces there. She can look at those.

S: What are you taking this semester?

G: I'm taking Chinese brush painting, which is a repeat for me. I've had it twice already. The first time I took it, and the second time was audit. This time I'm taking it for no credit because I figured if I just audit the class, it will not be incentive for me. It is the same teacher, Dr. Betty Ecke, who is a very--I think she is the only teacher here who knows all about Chinese brush painting. I think there is one teacher in the Continuing School of Education, but there is a language barrier.

This one here has an accent, but she is so knowledgeable. She teaches each stroke of the tree, leaves, landscaping and figures and all that. She's very particular. She can reject... Maybe I make six pieces of the same thing and she rejects every one of them. She'll probably take the first one because it's more relaxed. When I try to copy something...

S: You tense up.

G: Yes, tense up, and she says that's no good. That's it. That's why I'm taking it. It's three hours on Tuesday and Thursday. This house of mine gets very hot in the afternoon because I chopped down four plumeria trees that used to tower over the house. It was a little cooler. I chopped those trees down because of a disease, so I thought that two days a week would be good. These kids now know that I have taken it before and they come to me. I say, "She's the teacher."

S: Are there any other classes that you want to take after this?

G: Yes, yes.

S: You're going to keep going forever and forever, aren't you?

G: I hope so. Because, for one thing, the tuition is free and there are some botany classes that I wanted to take this semester, but it's on in the spring. It's the identification of more Hawaiian plants that I want to take. I saw one of my teaching assistants that I had taken my one botany class--that's the one that we went up to Diamond Head and identified all these plants and weeds. They were actually weeds. I didn't recognize him because he got fatter. They get fat after they get older. He had glasses on and he had written a book, a little pamphlet, on Hawaiian plants and weeds. He had lived down in the South Pacific for many years.

When he saw me in the garden near St. John's, he said, "Weren't you in my class before?" I looked at him carefully and I said, "Oh, you're Art Whistler." He said, "Yes, I am. What are you doing here?" I told him that I had graduated, but that I wanted to take that other class. He said that it wouldn't be in until the spring.

There are a lot of ethnic classes that I want to take. The Hawaiian one that has that garden that I showed you (where the first interview took place) that is run by the ethnic classes. I want to take that one again. I want to know what it's all about. They go down to the Maori origin of the Hawaiian language and I would like to take that class, too. I didn't go to that yet because the class is at eight-thirty in the morning and I can't see myself getting up for an eight-thirty class. (laughs)

Oh, those early classes, when I went to lectures, I used to fall asleep. When they'd have slide shows and all that. When they're talking, it's not bad, but when the professor talks a little bit and then darkens the auditorium, you just fall asleep again.

S: But you have no intention of stopping because there's always more and more for you to learn, and you're going to keep right on going as long as you can.

G: There's also computer weaving. Weaving by computer now. We have one in the Weaving Department now. It's a small one, but later on if there's enough people, they may get a bigger one.

My teacher, the one who died, Shore, had one that was more intricate, but whether they'll buy it from her estate--because they're having a sale tomorrow. They're buying as many things that she had because she was a teacher who did a lot of commission work. Her last work is now at the new

Kaiser Hospital in Aiea in the foyer. As soon as they spotted it, they knew it was Shore's. They may sell some of her work later on because the medical bills went up pretty high. This one is all the weaving odds and ends, like threads, and all the things that she used before and the department could use. They bought a whole slew already. There was a loom for $800 that somebody wanted to buy, but they didn't have the money. They're all trying to help. The Hawaii Craftsmen and the Hawaiian Weavers hui that she belonged to are going to go out tomorrow and buy all her things to help her husband with the medical bills. She was just going in and out of the hospital.

I would like to someday go into that computer weaving although it is not three dimensional, because when you do that thing it is just geometric. Squares or plaids and that's it, but you can bring out wonderful colors. Whatever color you want.

S: You just feed the design that you want into the computer and it takes it up from there?

G: It picks it up and transfers it to the piece of paper. Then from that paper you follow and you dress the loom. The loom is right next to it. You dress the loom according to that design. Then when you finish dressing the loom, you push the button and it just does all the weaving. Like a factory. I would like to learn that. We started to, just the semester before I graduated, but you had to go by appointment and you don't know how long that one person will take. You've got to get through, so another person can get on. Sometime later when they don't have as many graduate students, I would like to go back.

S: There are probably a lot of people though who would reject that high tech as not being real art.

G: Yes, right. But then, you see, with that we can add something more. We can always inject fibers and things like that.

S: It opens up new worlds for you.

G: That's it. The papermaking's the same thing, too. I haven't stopped. I'm still experimenting. I still have a lot of fibers that I haven't finished yet. I have done only about twenty or twenty-five. There could be as many as fifty plants. Not all Hawaiian. Maybe some of them that grow here. I would like to cut some of those and see how they work out and if they're very plentiful like this one called guinea grass--it looks like sugarcane--overgrown weeds--a big thing--they grow everywhere. They make the nicest paper, but it gets very itchy. You have to wear gloves and long sleeves. It's all over the place. People say, "Come to my

yard. I have a lot of that. Come and help me cut." I said, "I don't have the time yet." I have two refrigerators just oozing with pulp that I did before I went away. I did all that and put it away and I said as soon as I get well--hopefully by next week the doctor says--I will proceed to make handmade paper for my brush painting class. I want to do my final project with that.

I haven't told the teacher yet, but the teacher was mentioning, "If you're a papermaker, you can make beautiful handmade paper and work with brush painting." Somebody looked at me and I just hid my head. I didn't want to tell her, because otherwise she'll just bug me and say, "Can I have some of your paper?" I'm stingy with the paper because it's not easy to get for one thing. And because I work with smaller sheets--I don't work with big sheets--my daughter-in-law brought some back from Korea--some mulberry. I have some mulberry from three or four countries, which I collected at garage sales in Santa Cruz. It's not going to stop me really because the basketry is something that I really love also.

Last Sunday, two other people besides my daughter-in-law were supposed to come and do some basketry. Not this kind, but what they call the melon or egg basket. Some of them are wedged. That's the easiest basket. She wants some for her employees for Christmas. I said I would help her with it. She came last Sunday and she learned that.

S: You're lucky that you have plenty of room to work.

G: Yes, three bedrooms. Only one for myself. The other one is where I have all my fibers. The other one is where I have my loom. Anybody that comes, they have to go to a hotel. When my son comes, he goes to a friend's.

S: This is a great location though. You have all this room and you're close to the university. You're close to the Academy of Arts.

G: Not only that, the University is ideal for me because I can pick all the fibers I want. Like that thornless lauhala from the pandanus tree. There are several areas there, although some people know where it is now, and they get permission from the state to pick those things. Whenever there's a great big windstorm. I'm up there before they get there. I have bags and bags of fiber. They're all labeled and put away because of the dust and everything.

It's just fabulous there. For senior citizens it's just grand. I pick a lot of palm seeds like the Manila palm. There's one called the blue latan palm. There's two seeds to one palm nut and it looks like it's been engraved. People turn it to the other side and make scrimshaw out of it. Imitation scrimshaw. Some lady was charging seventy-five

cents to people who were trying to pick that up. I said, "You should be ashamed of yourself." She doesn't need the money. She's a doctor's wife.

I pick all these big bags full and I give them to some lady who teaches, Makua Alii. She teaches lauhala. She gives it to the man who's in charge of all the jewelry there because those poor people can't go out and get all those things. Some of them go up as early as four o'clock, when it gets bright, to pick those seeds. Now they are so plentiful that when I go by, I pick up for her and the Manila palm, which is right along the Art Building, there's gobs of trees there. They're red. When you see those palm trees, they're all red--just the outer skin--and inside the Manila palm is kind of calico or spotted. All kinds of stuff there on the university grounds. That's why I don't want to leave that campus because I can pick all the fixings, so to speak, that I want.

S: Somebody's done a book on all the trees and plants on the university campus, haven't they?

G: Yes, but the signs are all out. One time one sign fell down and they put it on another tree and I said, "Oh, boy, that's not good." I don't know when they're going to put them up. I've been bugging them. There were several times that people went into Sinclair and when they came out, they look and they don't know which tree it is. I just happened to come by and I'd say, "This tree is so-and-so and that tree is so-and-so." And they'd say, "Why don't you take us on a tour?" I said, "No."

I did that one time for the graduates and we were going on and somebody said, "Can I follow you?" And I said, "If you want to, it's okay." (laughs) We didn't go all the way because it was starting to rain. We had gone up to St. John's garden because there the botany classes have all these different flowers and plants that they use, and the ethnobotany under Dr. Abbott has all these Hawaiian plants. It's easy for me to take them up there and say here, here, here.

S: Rather than go all over. It's concentrated.

G: But then I took them from there down to Sinclair. And there is that--what is that animal that smells so bad? That stinks so bad?

S: All I can think of is a skunk.

G: Yes, skunk tree. There are several skunk trees up there and then there are several further up underneath the little huts along the parking area there. You've got to hold your breath it smells so bad. It smells exactly like a skunk. If

you've been on the mainland and run over a skunk, that is it. There's one that you've got to go past to catch the bus. Right past that Sinclair Library. It's blooming now. You've got to hold your breath. There is another name for that tree, but we call it a skunk tree. There are a lot of interesting trees right around that vicinity there. There are a lot of things to be picked up.

S: Well, as they say, lucky you live Hawaii.

G: That's why my girlfriend says she likes to come back here where you can pick anything you want.

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THE WATUMULL FOUNDATION ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

The Watumull Foundation Oral History Project began in June of 1971. During the following seventeen months eighty-eight people were taped. These tapes were transcribed but had not been put in final form when the project was suspended at the end of 1972.

In 1979 the project was reactivated and the long process of proofing, final typing and binding began. On the fortieth anniversary of the Watumull Foundation in 1982 the completed histories were delivered to the three repositories.

As the value of these interviews was realized, it was decided to add to the collection. In November of 1985 Alice Sinesky was engaged to interview and edit thirty-three histories that have been recorded to mark the forty-fifth anniversary of the Foundation.

The subjects for the interviews are chosen from all walks of life and are people who are part of and have contributed to the history of Hawaii.

The final transcripts, on acid-free Permalife bond paper and individually Velo-bound, are deposited and are available to scholars and historians at the Hawaii State Archives, the Hamilton Library at the University of Hawaii and the Cooke Library at Punahou School. The tapes are sealed and are not available.

August 1987